

Ashland Watershed Trail Assessment

Introduction

The Trails Unlimited team went through several phases in compiling this trail assessment and these comprise the sections of this document. First, a trail condition survey was completed. Second, trails were categorized into the most appropriate user group. Third, general assessments for each trail or trail segment were given and opportunities for interpretation were discussed, where appropriate. Fourth, recommendations for new construction were given. Fifth, general recommendations for the entire trail system were given. And, finally, general conclusions are shared.

This document is accompanied by a map visually representing the findings and recommendations of the team.

The “guts” of this assessment is the trail condition survey which categorizes trail segments into: sustainable, minor reroute, major reroute and drainage. Based on years of experience the Trails Unlimited team can take the condition survey findings and use them, in combination with input from users and local trail managers, as the basis for developing recommendations for a trail system that meets the needs of users and the goals and objectives of the Forest Service for a sustainable, efficient, manageable and enjoyable trail system.

Trail Condition Survey

Trail condition survey included the following steps:

1. Existing information about the individual trail such as maps, trail management objective (TMO), and discussions with local trail manager is compiled before the trail is walked/ ridden.
2. Trail use and level of difficulty is determined (subjectively).
3. Determine the type of existing water control (water bars, rolling dips, breaks in grade, or none).
4. Determine the overall percentage of the trail that is sustainable (examining tread and drainage structures, clearance or height and width of trail).
5. Determine if facilities are an issue (logs, crossings, jumps, drops or braiding).
6. If rerouting is required, determine if minor or major: **Minor** – less than 100 ft. or

Major – 100 ft or more (when rerouting - drainage structures will always be designed into the construction).

7. Determine what percent of drainage structures are needed.
8. Determine if any other resource issues exist, for example: archeological, biological, or visual.

Trail Condition Survey Assessment Definitions:

It's important to note the definitions used in the Trails Unlimited Assessment. The definitions of the four categories are listed below.

Sustainable – soil movement is limited to that which can be addressed through annual maintenance. The remaining unsustainable sections of trail will require minor reroute, major reroute or drainage.

Minor Reroute – reroute, or change of trail location, is needed within 100' of trail. This action usually can be addressed with minimal environmental documentation such as letter to the file, or categorical exclusion. A minor reroute would take into consideration any drainage structures that may be needed.

Major Reroute – reroute, or change of trail location, will need to occur more than 100' from existing trail. This action usually requires an environmental document such as an environmental assessment, although in some cases a categorical exclusion will suffice. A major reroute would take into consideration any drainage structures that may be needed.

Drainage – needs a drainage structure. This includes several issues. It could mean the drainage structure is non-existent or the existing drainage structure needs significant work (usually a water bar that requires redesign into a rolling dip). Or, it could mean that segments of trail require a manufactured break in grade (cut the grade down to allow water to drain off the trail). Once drainage needs are addressed the trail would then be sustainable.

User Groups

Recommendations were made as to the trail user group that should be encouraged along each trail. User group categories addressed include: foot, cross country bike, family bike, downhill bike, and dog walker. Along trails where foot traffic is encouraged the user may encounter hikers and runners. Along trails where cross country biking is encouraged the rider may find uneven terrain and fire roads. Family biking is encouraged along fire roads and trails where there are few severe changes in grade. Along downhill biking trails the user will find gravity assisted biking opportunities and natural features, such as downed trees, that may require a high degree of skill to navigate. Trails where dog walking is encouraged are located close to city parks and trailheads that can be described as fairly easy terrain.

Just because a use is encouraged does not mean that other uses cannot be allowed. Encouraged means the trail is most uniquely well-suited for the particular use. Managers may decide to allow foot travel on all trails although it will be encouraged only on specific trails.

Map Legend for User Groups:

BLACK= foot/hiking/walking – Typical walking activities by local residents on a daily basis.

GREEN= cross country biking (XC Bike) – The rider may find uneven terrain; however fire roads are also included in this trail category. XC bikers traditionally ride both up and down trail segments primarily in loops

BLUE = family biking – Family biking is encouraged along fire roads and trails where there are few severe changes in grade. Family bikers traditionally ride in short loops where few obstacles are present.

RED = downhill biking (DH) – In downhill biking the user will find gravity assisted biking opportunities and natural features, such as downed trees, that may require a high degree of skill to navigate. Speeds are usually higher and few long uphill grades desirable.

BROWN = dog walkers – Typical dog walking activities from local residence on a daily basis. Many dog walkers want to let their animal/animals off leash. Such an activity should be managed to prevent disturbance of wildlife or to other walkers.

YELLOW = sanitation facility – The entire watershed has no sanitation facilities to aid the capture and management of human and animal waste. Because the watershed is specifically managed for a municipal water supply the issue of waste management should be addressed.

PURPLE = trailhead – Traditional facilities of parking, informational kiosk, outhouse and interpretive information would enhance the educational and managerial aspects of the Watershed and recreational activities.

Trail Assessment by Individual Trail or Trail Segment

Existing Legal Trails

Bull Gap

Trails Unlimited further divided Bull Gap into Upper Bull Gap and Lower Bull Gap as recommendations vary for the two segments.

Upper Bull Gap

Upper Bull Gap is a legal trail and is 70 percent sustainable. The ski area currently uses Upper Bull Gap as an access road to maintain lifts and runs. The trail has little drainage. The trail is bumpy and both large and small rocks are found in the trail.

It is recommended that Upper Bull Gap be retained in the trail system and be designated as a trail encouraged for downhill bike users. Drainage needs to be repaired. This trail offers the possibility of trail features to be constructed and operated by the ski area permit holder. There are segments of illegal trail located off of FS 1151 that are “fall line” trail and these should be eliminated.

Lower Bull Gap

The trailhead consists of an intersection with a kiosk. The trailhead should be further developed to include an outhouse, parking, gateway and kiosk. It is recommended that Lower Bull Gap be retained in the system but encouraged for cross country users since it has a climb that is not conducive to downhill. However, the downhillers are presently using the trail so it should be an allowed use. Many of the downhillers are using Forest Service road 200 as an alternative. The Forest Service must decide if they wish to redirect downhillers to the road for this segment and encourage cross country biking or encourage both cross country and downhill bike use on this trail.

A section (5 percent) of Lower Bull Gap is “fall line” trail and is in need of major rerouting to a contour alignment.

It is recommended this trail be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Cat Walk

Fifteen percent of Cat Walk requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Ten percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. It is recommended this trail be encouraged for downhill users. A cross country loop opportunity exists as users can ride down the trail and take the road back up.

It is recommended that Cat Walk be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Caterpillar

Five percent of Caterpillar requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Ten percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. Caterpillar is a good flow link opportunity to other trails.

It is recommended this trail be designated and encouraged for downhill bike users.

Corp Camp

Five percent requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Five percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. This trail is mostly flat and straight. For users riding from town the trail provides multiple loop opportunities for cross country users.

It is recommended that Corp Camp be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Eastview

Trails Unlimited further divided Eastview Trail into Lower Eastview and Upper Eastview.

Lower Eastview

Lower Eastview is a legal trail. Five percent requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Five percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features.

Lower Eastview should be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Upper Eastview (Illegal trail)

Upper Eastview is an illegal trail. Five percent requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Five percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. This trail should be added to the designated system as it completes Eastview as a cross country loop. This trail appears to be an old (previous) trail and is a great connector trail. This trail adds considerably to the loop opportunity with only a minor investment.

Upper Eastview should be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Horn Gap

Trails Unlimited further divided Horn Gap into Upper and Lower.

Upper Horn Gap

Upper Horn Gap is located at a higher elevation. It is a legal trail and 65 percent requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade due to serpentine trail design. It is recommended that Upper Horn Gap be retained in the trail system and designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Lower Horn Gap

Lower Horn Gap is located at a lower elevation. It is a legal trail. Ten percent requires minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade due to serpentine trail design. Ten percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. The trail should be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users. In addition it offers opportunities for walkers and runners.

Lamb Mine

Lamb Mine is an old road that dead ends at the Lamb mine. It is a short flat trail although ten percent of the trail needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage. This trail presents an opportunity to develop a loop for family bike riding and dog walking. It is located 1.2 miles from the parking area so it would offer roughly a 2.5 mile opportunity. This would require 0.5 miles of new construction.

It is recommended that Lamb Mine be designated as encouraged for family bike riding and dog walking. In addition this trail offers opportunities for developing interpretive displays about mining.

Toothpick

Toothpick traverses a steep hillside. Ten percent of the trail needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage. The parking area and access off of 2080 needs expansion to accommodate more parking for existing use.

Toothpick should be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users and foot travel.

Illegal Trails

Buzz Saw or Chainsaw

Buzz Saw or Chainsaw is an illegal trail. It was not assigned for assessment but should be assessed in the future as it is very likely to present future opportunities for downhill bike use.

Menace

Although Menace is an illegal trail it is in good condition and was assessed as 100 percent sustainable. This trail should be proposed for inclusion in the trail system as it will be a good link trail.

Menace should be designated as encouraged for cross country bikers as well as foot travel, as it would be well-suited to runners. This trail offers an opportunity for interpretation of historical activities at Skyline Mine.

Upper Time Warp

Upper Time Warp needs a lot of work to become fully sustainable but it is well worth the effort and should be added to the trail system. It provides an additional link (in addition to Upper Bull Gap) from the ski area to the trail system.

Upper Time Warp needs major rerouting over about 20 percent of the trail. Ten percent needs minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Forty percent needs drainage.

It is recommended that Upper Time Warp be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

Wagner Glade

Trails Unlimited split Wagner Glade into Upper and Lower Wagner.

Upper Wagner

Upper Wagner is 85 percent sustainable. Five percent needs minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Ten percent needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features.

It is recommended that Upper Wagner be designated as encouraged for foot travel because it ties into Wagner Butte Trail (Trail #1011), a hiking only trail.

Lower Wagner

Forty percent of the 1.6-mile Lower Wagner trail is sustainable in its present condition. Twenty percent needs minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Thirty percent of the trail needs major rerouting. It is recommended that this trail be rerouted to provide a loop opportunity as it is critical to tie into Lower Time Warp. Ten percent of the trail needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage. Drainages are full of large trees and debris.

It is recommended Lower Wagner be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users and foot travel. An opportunity exists for offering interpretation along the trail for the Winburn historic cabin that was once located on the site.

Reservoir

Reservoir Trail is an illegal trail that dead ends at the Reservoir. Forty percent of the trail needs minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Thirty percent needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage features. The Forest Service will allow this trail to remain but will not sign or promote the trail.

It is recommended the Reservoir trail be foot only.

Lower Time Warp

Lower Time Warp is an illegal trail, but can be made sustainable once the drainage is installed. It should be included in the system as it provides a loop opportunity for Lower Wagner and an opportunity for a new loop to Horn Gap Trail for cross country bike users. Ten percent of the trail needs minor rerouting to establish breaks in grade. Ninety percent needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage.

Lower Time Warp should be designated as encouraged for cross country bike users.

No Candies

No Candies is an illegal trail but is 95 percent sustainable in its present condition. This trail should be included in the system as a cross country bike loop opportunity due to its proximity to town and separation from downhill trail users. Since the trail is linked with the road, riders can use it to shorten their loop or make the loop easier. It provides a moderate family ride opportunity.

Five percent of No Candies needs drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage.

No Candies should be designated as encourage for cross country bike users and foot travel.

Jabberwocky

This trail is recommended for closure. Only five percent of the trail is sustainable, 10 percent requires minor rerouting and 85 percent is in need of major rerouting. Although the trail offers downhill opportunities it would be better to start from scratch in a different location. It is recommended that the Forest Service locate a new trail for downhillers using sustainable trail criteria. The new location will not include constructed features on Forest Service lands.

Missing Link

This trail is a priority to link the East Side Trail system for downhill bike users. Most of this trail is sustainable in its current condition (83 percent sustainable). Seven percent needs minor rerouting and 10 percent needs drainage. The trail functions to keep downhill bike users mostly off the road thus limiting user conflict. This is a critical link to provide for shuttle opportunities for downhill biker users.

It is recommended that Missing Link be designated as encouraged for downhill bike users.

Marty's

Although only 25 percent of this illegal trail is sustainable, it is an important link to separate cross country bike users from downhill users. This trail will require both minor (10 percent) and major (60 percent) rerouting to the east side of the ridge in order to be sustainable. Five percent requires drainage work to install rolling dips in areas with long runs between drainage. The old trail will need restoration (going in with an excavator and restoring original contours) to take care of existing illegal trails and braided trails that take off from Marty's.

Marty's should be designated as encouraged for downhill bike users.

Fall On Knee Trail

The Fall On Knee Trail was an illegal runner trail identified by a member of the public. Fall On Knee is 100 percent unsustainable as it is all "fall line" trail. This trail, and other unidentified illegal runner trails, should be assessed at a future date.

New Trails to be Constructed:

- Trail from Lower Time Warp to Horn Gap (1.5 mi)
- Extension of Lamb Mine for loop (0.5 mi)

- Dog walking loops at trailheads and locations closest to Ashland including: White Rabbit (.25 mi), Four Corners (0.25 mi), Glen View (extension of first creek crossing of FSR 2060 to develop loop opportunity for family bike users and dog walkers) (0.75 mi)
- Reroute entire Jabberwocky Trail (.75 mi)
- Marty's Extension – connects Marty's to Forest Rd 2060 (0.15 mi)
- Marty's Connector – connects Cat Walk to Marty's (0.25 mi)
Together Marty's Connector and Marty's Extension combine to provide a shorter loop for family and cross country riding. It is recommended that the name for Marty's Extension and Marty's Connector be changed in order to distinguish it as a family and cross country route rather than a downhill trail.

General Recommendations for the Entire Trail System

- Locate constructed features (jumps, stunts, ladders) on City lands or lands managed by the ski area
- Recommend City develop a free ride bike park
- All trail construction grades should average 20 percent or less and no fall line trails
- Manage all trails for two-way traffic
- Install arched culverts where cross drains are present
- Have consistent messages and logos on all maps, signs, websites, and brochures.
consistent logo
- Coordinate with the ski area, local businesses and other partners for consistent message, trail location map
- Develop a fee collection for the area
- Develop an Operations and Maintenance Plan for the area
- Volunteer Coordination Plan — orientation, training, coordination, recognition, supervision, management
- Develop Trail Management Objectives (TMOs) for all trails
- Develop a Sign/Interpretation Plan for all trail use
 - ✓ The sign plan should be completed before construction begins

- Develop an Interpretive Information Plan to explain the unique attributes of the watershed
- Develop gateways for different user groups with informational kiosks
- Provide sanitation facilities at trailheads
 - ✓ Sanitation facilities should be offered at trailheads and trail junctions. It is recommended that six locations be established including: the ski area, Bull Gap, Four Corners, White Rabbit, intersection of Horn Gap and Upper Wagner and Glen View Drive.
- Develop looped trail systems
- Offer bypasses around more difficult areas

Conclusions

This trail assessment is the beginning of a long process to meet the needs of the users and protect the watershed while fully realizing the outstanding multi-use trail potential of National Forest lands in partnership with the City of Ashland, trails groups, ski area, and others. The area can provide a diverse array of outstanding recreational opportunities while preserving the integrity of the watershed for the City of Ashland.

Although Trails Unlimited was originally tasked with assessing only mountain bike trails it quickly became apparent that a sustainable trail system must be multiple-use to address the needs of family biker users, walkers, hikers, runners, dog walkers and others. The area has the potential to offer a world class mountain bike system that also meets local needs for trails.

Fortunately the trail users and community are ready to put forth the hard work needed for a sustainable multiple-use trail system. The Trail Coalition will be an integral part of the planning effort; in addition they have the resources to obtain outside funding from a variety of sources for planning, training, construction, interpretive, and other efforts. Local community leaders are very supportive of Forest Service efforts to offer trail opportunities.

The extreme mountain biking culture is unique and integral to the City of Ashland. The trail planning efforts by the Forest Service should make every attempt to keep this unique culture in place. Ashland has some characteristics that make it ideal for mountain biking; it is a college town, it has a bike mechanic certification school (United Bicycle Institute), there are bike shops that cater specifically to the downhill rider, it has an existing tourist infrastructure with great restaurants, breweries, and overnight accommodations. As a result the downhill bike draw is international in scope.

The Forest Service has all the elements in place to provide a world class trail system that protects and manages the watershed while meeting the recreational needs of locals and visitors.